977.435

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Founded December 17, 1857 APRIL 1997

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

KAREN'S COLUMN

WALLPAPER REMOVAL EXPERIMENT NEEDS VOLUNTEERS, ARCHITECTS PREPARING DOCUMENTS FOR MoMS WORK

We are getting the details together for the interior restoration of the Museum on Main Street, to be funded by our Michigan Department of State Historic Preservation Grant. Paul Darling and Dave Evans of Quinn Evans/Architects have been hired and have made several visits to the museum.

They have sent us an outline of the scope of work and are now going ahead to prepare the construction documents we will need for the repairs and restoration. These should be complete by the middle to end of April.

Then, as dictated in the grant, the plans and specifications need to be approved in Lansing. After that, we will be taking competitive bids for the work to be done.

Several years ago some of you helped by removing the wall paper in the exhibit areas of the house. At that time we did not go ahead and finish scraping the entry hall.

The architect suggests that we do this work now with Historical Society volunteers. It may be difficult and expensive if included as part of the grant funds. Do we have any takers?

We would like to maintain as much of the original plaster in the house as possible. In different areas the plaster is variable. Taking the wall paper off in the entry may not be successful. (There is a chance that the paper is what is keeping the plaster on the walls. Remove it and the walls may end up on the floor!)

Please let me know if you would be available to take part in the "Wallpaper Removal Experiment." You can call me directly or leave a message at the Historical Society 662-9092.

Karen Koykka O'Neal
665-2242

SLANDERING T.R.

Three friends had just purchased automobiles and decided that appropriate ceremonies were in order to christen the machines. On the day set for the christening the three machines were lined up in a row -- a Packard, a Buick, and a Ford.

The owner of the Packard broke a bottle of champagne over the radiator of his machine, at the same time exclaiming:

"I christen thee George Washington, first in peace, first in war, first in the hearts of his countrymen."

The owner of the Buick then broke a bottle of grape juice over his machine, with the words:

"I christen thee Abraham Lincoln -- honest all through."

Then the Ford owner stepped forward, broke a bottle of beer over his machine, and exclaimed:

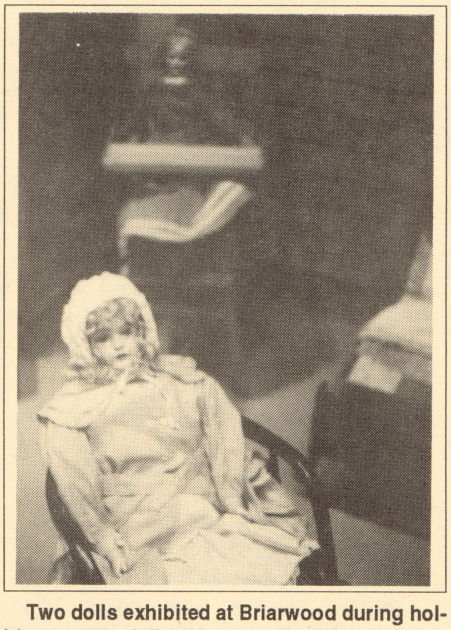
"I christen thee Theodore Roosevelt, you rough riding son of a gun."

From *Ford Smiles, All the Best Current Jokes About a Rattling Good Car,* Carleton B. Case, Shrewesbury Publishing Co., Chicago, 1917.

WCHS HAS 3,665 POINTS

WCHS has collected 3,665 Knapp's Restaurant points toward our next goal to be announced soon. Please keep collecting.

Anyone who eats at Knapp's may request a yellow points slip from the cashier each time. One point is given for each dollar spent. Please give or send to Alice Ziegler, 537 Riverview Dr., Ann Arbor, MI 48104.



Two dolls exhibited at Briarwood during holidays., 1900 doll in foreground, Miss Emily in background in high chair. See story on page 6.

WASHTENAW VILLAGES GRACE SHACKMAN'S TOPIC APRIL 20 IN SALINE

Grace Shackman, author of many articles on local history, will present a slide show on "The History of Washtenaw County Villages: Dexter, Chelsea, Manchester and Saline" at the April WCHS meeting.

It will be at 2 p.m. Sunday April 20, at the Saline District Library, 555 North Maple Road, Saline. The library is a few blocks north of Michigan Avenue (U.S. 12), next to Saline High School.

From Ann Arbor take Ann Arbor-Saline Road to Maple Road, left on Maple several miles, past Saline High School to the library (west side of road, south of high school).

Maple intersects U.S.12 in Saline just east of downtown. Turn north to library.

ANNUAL POTLUCK WILL BE AT FORMER FORD MILL IN MACON MAY 21

The annual potluck dinner meeting and election of officers will be Wednesday, May 21 at the former Ford Mill in Macon, now owned by Karen and Joe O'Neal and Hank Bednarz.

Bruce Pietrykowski, associate professor of economics at the U-M Dearborn Campus, will speak on "Looking Forward Through the Rear View Mirror: Henry Ford's Village Industry Plants." More details next month.

NOMINATED FOR 1997-98

The Nominating Committee announces the following slate of nominees to be presented to the General Membership at the Annual Meeting Wednesday, May 21:

President, Susan Cee Wineberg;

Vice-President, Ina Hanel-Gerdenich;

Recording Secretary, Judith Chrisman; Corresponding Secretary, Pauline V. Walters; Treasurer, Patricia W. Creal.

Nominated to three year terms as directors are Lucile Fisher, Peggy Haines, Karen Simpson and Jay Snyder.

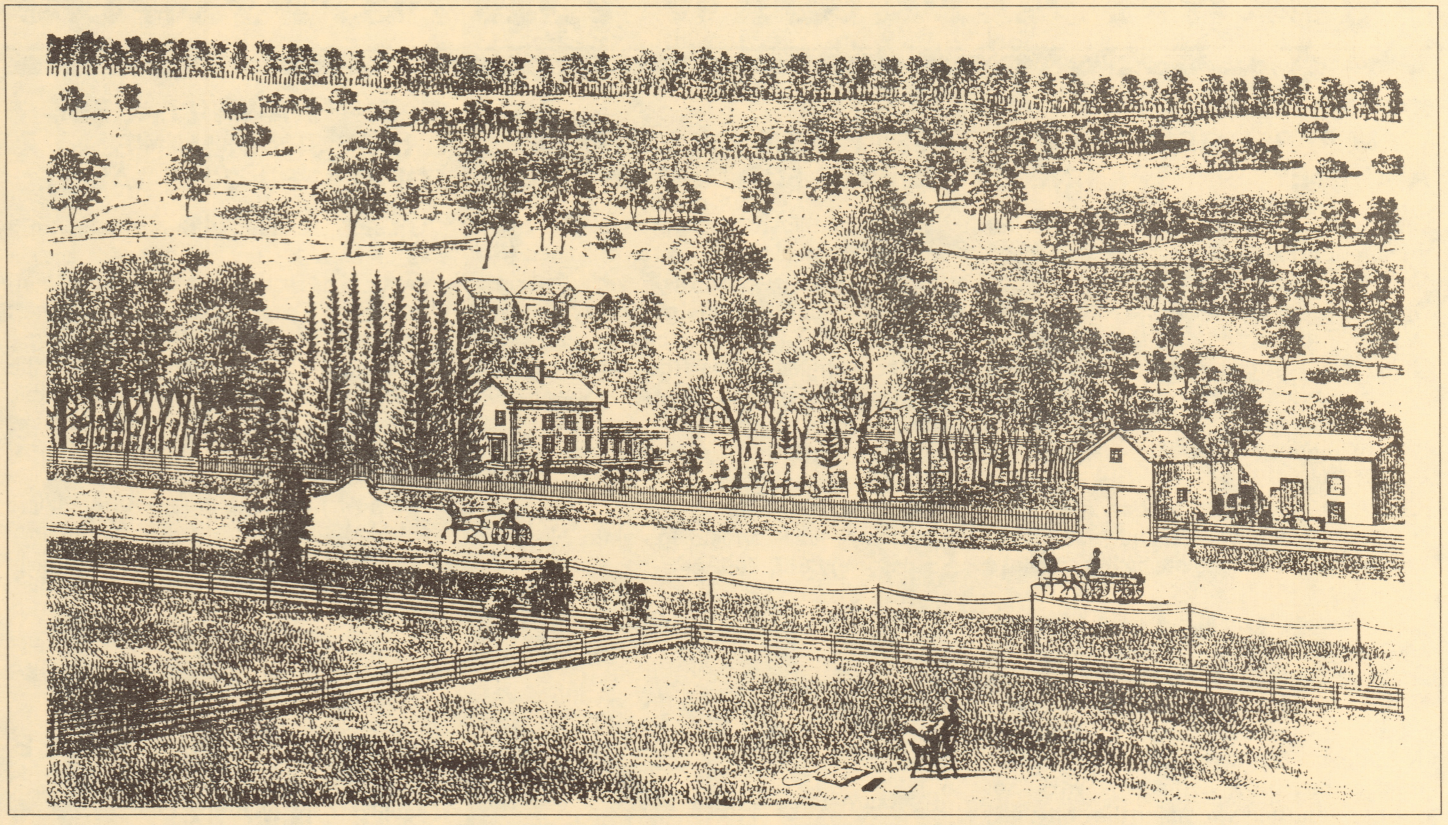
Caroline Mohai, Corresponding Secretary this year, is resigning from the Board at the end of this term because of the press of other duties.

The Nominating Committee is composed of Arthur French, Patricia Creal, Rosemarion Blake and Pauline Walters.

The Genealogical Society of
Washtenaw County, Mich., Inc.
P.O. Box 7155
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-7155

FRUIT CULTIVATION IN EARY WASHTENAW COUNTY

BY MARY CULVER



This artist's rendition of the Ezra D. Lay farm on Michigan Avenue east of Ypsilanti took up a full page spread in the 1874 Washtenaw County Atlas befitting the former president of the Eastern Michigan Agricultural Society who was elected to the State Senate in 1874.

Tomorrow in schools and offices and stores all over our wonderfully diverse country, people of widely divergent national origins will celebrate an ancient tradition that belongs to only one, the Irish.

There will be parades, green beer will flow like wine, and most of us will make some effort to wear a bit or a lot of the color green. For tomorrow is the annual party for the Irish, and everyone wants to be Irish on St. Patrick's Day.

All of this is my way of leading up to the fact that Americans have always loved a party, and in the year 1876 they had a birthday to celebrate.

It had been a hundred years since Thomas Jefferson had proclaimed his revolutionary and treasonous Declaration of Independence, and the young Republic which had emerged had been through two wars for independence from England and a bloody Civil War that might have put an end to everything the founding fathers had struggled to accomplish.

Michigan's settlement period, which had really begun with the opening of the Erie Canal, had telescoped all of the efforts required to tame a wilderness into a mere 51 years, and nobody had to coax Michiganders to come to America's birthday party.

What they were lacking in duration of occupancy, they could make up for in standard of excellence, and two paragraphs of the *Centennial Memorial Record* published by S.B. McCracken for the *Detroit Free Press* summed up one of Michigan's achievements this way:

> The event which first brought Michigan into prominence at the Centennial was the special exhibition of winter apples of the crop of 1875, in May 1876. With the exception of a few plates of fine apples exhibited by the Iowa Horticultural Society, the display of Michigan was the only exhibition proving the keeping qualities of American apples.
>
> The unpacking and exposure of several barrels of choice apples over six months after they were gathered, in a State a thousand miles distant, diffusing a delightful aroma through the hall, and presenting such a variety of forms and of color, from a yellowish green to a deep cardinal, all bright and crisp, attracted much attention, and caused many inquiries as to the character of the country where fruit with such remarkable keeping qualities could be grown. The State Pomological Society was the principal exhibitor and received the award.

Contrast this glowing testimony to the report made in 1812 by a Government surveyor sent to explore the Michigan Territory:

> Taking the country altogether, so far as has been explored, and to all appearances, together with the information received concerning the balance, it is so bad there would not be more than one acre out of a hundred, if there would be one out of a thousand, that would in any case admit of cultivation.

Even if we allow for some creative hyperbole on both sides, it seems clear that Michigan pioneers had come a very long way in converting the territory from unproductive swampland to successful farmland.

My talk today came out of my curiosity about how Michigan's success, as it applied to Washtenaw County, was achieved in such a short time and also how the nutritional needs for fresh and preserved fruit were met during the establishment of Michigan's leadership role.

To me it made sense to begin with some idea of what fruits had already been growing naturally in our county before the settlement period began.

In researching the fruits found here I went to the list of all the flora originally compiled by Elizabeth C. Allmendinger for the Ann Arbor Scientific Association in the same year as the Centennial.

It claimed 101 "orders" represented in

Washtenaw County compared to a total of 130 included in Gray's Botany of the Northern States. Of those, here are the more or less edible fruits--many more than I expected.

They may not be fruits that would be popular today, however, or even palatable. Indeed, I suspect there are several that have never appeared on any of our plates. For example, how many of you have ever eaten a papaw? How about a mandrake?

Listen to this excerpt from an autobiography by William Andrew Spalding, recalling his boyhood spent in a house on Maynard Street during the 1850s.

> Frank, Nell and I, on rare occasions, footed it four or five miles, on the southeast road to Grandpa Cole's farm, and there we found great sport. Sometimes we foraged through the wooded pasture lot and, if the season was right, gathered a little store of mandrakes, or May apples that grew on little spindle legged plants with umbrella tops. The fruits were about the size, shape and texture of those dwarf tomatoes which we sometimes encounter at the market, and when ripe, were yellow. But they didn't have to be ripe when we gathered them; only full [size], for we took them home and buried them in the bran barrel, and, after two weeks or such matter, they came out yellow and mellow enough. And oh boy! You just put one end in your mouth and squeezed, and the whole mushy, juicy, sweety, seedy content came gushing out and down your throat before you could say Jack Robinson.

Incidentally, the Cole farm was located at what is now the Ann Arbor Golf and Outing Club and extended from Stadium Boulevard all the way to Scio Church Road.

The "southeast road" he mentions was a planked toll road, that connected with an Indian trail leading to Saline which, in turn led to the famous Chicago Road. Today we call this stretch South Main Street.

Other native fruits were described in even earlier accounts. A Jesuit missionary named Hennepin, writing about the hardships of constructing LaSalle's fort in 1679 on Lake Michigan at the mouth of the St. Joseph River, wrote:

> We had no other food but the bears' flesh our savage killed. These beasts were very common on that place because of the great quantity of grapes they find there.

And according to the Chapman 1881 *History of Washtenaw County*, the Raisin River was so named because of the "dense cluster of grapes which at an early day lined both banks."

In a report to the Pioneer Society of Michigan, one A.D.P. Van Buren recounts these mouth-watering discoveries in traveling the Territorial Road from Detroit to Calhoun County:

> Throughout the woods we saw the grape-vine hanging from the trees laden with its fruit. We saw vast thickets and long rifts of blackberry bushes lately burdened with their tempting berries. And we were told that the woods and hillsides and [oak] openings, in their season were fairly red with the largest and most delicious strawberries, while the wild plum grew along the small streams, the huckleberry and the cranberry on the marshes, and the aromatic sassafras was found throughout the woods.

One fruit conspicuous by its absence from Allmendinger's list and that of other travelers is the apple. I found two references to this important fruit, the first from an unidentified reporter speaking before the Michigan Pioneer Society in 1884 about fruit growing in the Saginaw Valley who said:

> The first white person that visited this valley (unless it may have been the Jesuits) found several clusters of apple-trees growing at different points near the banks of the rivers, which yearly produced large crops of fruit....Their origin was generally conceded to have been from seeds brought by the Indians from Canada....but that could hardly have been, for those trees must have commenced their growth long before those regular trips [to receive annuities from the British Government] were made by the Indians. It is my opinion that those trees had their origin from trees brought by the [French] Jesuits when they were establishing missionary stations at all important points around the Great Lakes.

And this explanation seems to be corroborated in another report about fruit cultivation in Ottawa County by Walter Phillips to the West Michigan Fruit Growers' Society. He claimed that:

> North America, including Canada and the United States, and even Mexico had most of its fruits introduced by the French and Romish missionaries.

And then Mr. Phillips tells this irresistible aside concerning something he calls sand cherries which, he said, grew in great abundance in the immediate vicinity of settlements.

> I was once passing the American Fur Company's store where a quantity of cherries that had been soaked in whiskey had been thrown out and devoured by a drove of hogs. The effect of alcohol upon the swine was the same as upon other animals. They would reel, stagger, fall down, rise on their haunches and grunt, attempt to fight, fall over one another, and act just as silly as a bunch of drunken men.

Finally, a description of Detroit in the late seventeen hundreds includes this reference from Phillips's report:

> Gardening and fruit raising were carried on more thoroughly than general farming. Apples and pears were good and abundant.

'EDIBLE' WILD FRUITS OF EARLY WASHTENAW

Asimina	Common Papaw (A. triloba)
Podophyllum	May Apple (P. pelatum L.)
Vitis	Summer Grape (V. aestivalis Michx.)
"	Frost grape
Prunus	Wild yellow or red plum (P. Americana)
Fragaria	Virginia strawberry (F. Virginiana)
Rubus	Dwarf raspberry (R. triflorus , Richardson)
"	Low blackberry (R. canadensis)
"	Thimbleberry (R. occidentalis)
"	Wild red raspberry (R. strigosus)
Crataegus	Common hawthorn (C. coccinea)
"	Common pearthorn (C. ttomentosa)
Pyrus	Common pear (P. communis)
Malus	American crabapple (M. corunaria)
Amelanchier	Shadbush/serviceberry (A. Canadensis, A. Botryapium)
Ribes	Common Gooseberry (R. Cynosbati)
"	Wild black currant (R. floridum)
"	*Red currant (R. Rubrum)
Sambucus	Common elder (S. Canadensis)
"	Redberried elder (S. pubens)
Viburnum	Sweet viburnum/sheepberry (V. Lentago)
"	Downey arrowroot/ pursh (V. pubescens)
"	*Cranberry tree (V. Opulus)
Vaccinium	Small cranberry (V. Oxycoccus)
"	Large cranberry (V. macrocarpus)
"	Dwarf blueberry (V. Pennsylvanicum)
"	Canada blueberry (V. Canadense)
"	Low blueberry (V. vacillans)
Physalis	Low hairy ground cherry (P. pubescens)
Morus	White mulberry (M. alba)

** Identified as rare or confined to small localities.*

The above names are spelled and capitalized as in their sources.

That general farming had a lower priority than fruit production makes sense when we remember the transitory nature of the occupations of the first white men. They were trappers, explorers and men of God whose work took them into the wilderness where the tending of a farm or garden was impossible.

Apples, on the other hand, were essential to two mainstays of settlement: cider, which was often safer to drink than the local water, and vinegar, which, in those primitive times, was used as a food preservative, a household cleanser, and as a medicinal ingredient. Having to get them from so far away as Detroit or Saginaw Bay must have been mighty inconvenient.

As you can well imagine, Washtenaw pioneers wasted no time in planting apples and other fruits missing from the local scene.

Some, like the Grant family who came to Woodruff's Grove, now Ypsilanti, in 1824, even anticipated the need before their arrival in the county. Mrs. Alvin Cross, who married into the family whose name is preserved in Cross Street, described her travels with the Grants:

> We also had a half-barrel in which were carefully packed, in moist earth and moss, small apple trees, current (sic) bushes, rose bushes, lilac, snowball and other shrubs.

Another pioneer, Melvin D. Osband of Nankin in Wayne County states:

> It was nearly ten years after our settlement before cultivated fruits were grown. The first peaches were produced on my Uncle Swift's trees, in 1832; the next year one grew on my father's trees. Apples, in small quantities appeared about the same time.

These successes were by no means the rule. One attempt by a Mr. Woodbridge to ship twenty small trees and plants from Buffalo to Detroit by schooner in about 1830 is described by an early Pomological Society member who recalled:

> The boat became frozen in the water where it stayed until the lake ice melted the following spring, and when it finally arrived in Detroit, the whole lot were found to be dead.

Enter the Lay brothers, Ezra D. and Zina K. Only two years apart in age, Ezra was born in 1807 in Saybrook, Connecticut and Zina in 1809. In 1812, their parents, Aaron and Sarah Lay , moved the family to a homestead four miles northwest of Rochester, New York, where the senior Lays helped to found the First Presbyterian Church of Rochester in 1815.

Educated in the district schools of Monroe County, New York, Ezra spent two additional years in what is called a "select" school before taking charge of a small farm when he "came of age."

He became a "cooper" and spent four years augmenting his farm operation by making flour barrels for Rochester mills.. Then in 1833, he and Zina left New York to make their fame and fortunes in Washtenaw County--and the rest, as they say, is history.

But let Ezra tell it, as he reported it years later in a letter to the State Pomological Society.

> Sir--At your request I send you an account of the nursery started and carried on in the town[ship] of Ypsilanti on the plains east of the now city of Ypsilanti.
>
> In the spring of 1833 I came to Michigan, then a territory, to select a place for establishing a nursery, and selected the above location. In the fall of 1833 my brother, Z.K. Lay, and myself came to Ypsilanti and brought with us about twenty-five thousand cultivated trees, mostly of one season's growth, from the nursery of Asa Rowe, near New York. They consisted of one hundred and thirty varieties of apples, seventy-five varieties of pears, forty of peaches, three of apricots, three of nectarines, twenty of cherries, twenty of plums, three of quinces, fifteen of strawberries, forty of grapes, native and foreign, together with currents [sic],gooseberries, raspberries, etc., also a large assortment of ornamental shrubs, evergreens, roses, peonies, herbaceous, perennial flowering plants, etc.
>
> In the autumn of 1834 we erected a small greenhouse and filled it with plants. I think this was the first greenhouse built in Michigan. In the autumn of 1836 we erected a larger greenhouse and filled it with a choice collection of tropical plants. I do not know that there was any nursery of fruit trees in Michigan at the time we started ours on the plains near Ypsilanti.
>
> This establishment comprises about 14 acres, and includes all kinds of trees and plants, ...[including] a great variety of fruit trees....Of apples, 162 kinds; of pears, 180; of peaches, 43; of cherries, 33; of plums, 30; of quinces, 6.

Ezra's letter admits that there were some problems with their original selection. They found the apricots and nectarines "too tender for cultivation in this climate," and the same was true for some specific varieties of pears and apples.

He ended by listing what he called these "leading varieties" of fruits cultivated by his nursery.

Biographical records in the collection of the Ypsilanti Historical Museum tell us that Ezra married Malinda Kinne, a daughter of the Rev. Joshua Kinne, on December 4,1834. In quick succession a daughter, Melissa, who later married Dr. William Pattison, a son William whose marriage to May Scotney produced no heirs, and Ezra, Jr., who died of tuberculosis and never married, were born to Ezra and Malinda.

Ezra's marriage was followed shortly in January 1837 by his brother's wedding of Maria Field who was the daughter of Darius Field. Maria was also a sister of Mrs. Lyman Wiard, whose descendants perpetuate the Wiard family's link to what is arguably Washtenaw County's best-known orchard today.

And incidentally, in doing some deed research on Ezra's parcel, I discovered that Asa Rowe, the nurseryman from whom the brothers acquired their original stock,

LEADING 19TH CENTURY FRUIT VARIETIES GROWN

Apples:	Baldwin
	Bellefleur
	Tart Bough
	Canada Red
	Snow
	Rhode Islands Greening
	Fall Pippin
	Summer Pippin
	Green Newton Pippin
	Porter
	Rambo
	Golden Russet
	Talman's Sweet
	Green Sweet
	Esopus Spitzenburg
	Swaar
	Twenty Ounce
Pears:	Bartlett
	Buffum
	White Doyenne
	Flemish Beauty
	Seckel
	Stevens' Genessee
Peaches:	Early Anne
	Sweetwater
	Royal Kensington
	Prince's Red Rareripe
	Orange
	Pound
	Barnard
	Early York
	Malta
	Red Cheek Melocoton
Cherries:	Amber Heart
	American Heart
	Black Heart
	Black Tartarian
	May Duke
	Ox Heart
	Carnation
	White Tartarian
Plums:	Coe's Golden Drop
	Duane's Purple
	Green Gage
	Bleeker's Gage
	Huling's Superb
	Smith's Orleans
	Washington
	Yellow Gage

was a partner in purchasing the land in Ypsilanti Township.

His name is on the deed dated 22 February 1834. This suggests that he may have either helped to finance the land purchase or have been named as an owner in exchange for some of the stock he furnished to the brothers.

By 1835 the brothers were using the *Michigan Argus* to spread the word of their success. Ads stressing their fruit tree selection appeared both in the spring and again in the fall to promote the nursery. [She showed] one dated March 1836.

In time to make the deadline for the 1874 Washtenaw County Atlas Ezra commissioned an engraving of his property showing as neat and prosperous a farmstead as any in the county. It must have impressed the artist too; he put himself in the foreground with his sketchpad and portfolio.

An engraving, taken from the same 1874 Atlas shows a plat map of Ypsilanti Township and a key to symbols used to designate specific landscape features.

Of special interest is a symbol, resembling a checkerboard. It represents an orchard, and it's easy to see that the Lay brothers had found a popular market for their business. Nearly every farmer had his own orchard in Ypsilanti Township, and this pattern is repeated on all the 1874 township plat maps for Washtenaw County.

To what degree we can assign the credit for this farm pattern to the Lay brothers and their nursery is unknown, but the popularity of fruit cultivation is clear.

By 1900 fruit production for Washtenaw County had grown to impressive proportions and included 148,460 bushels of apples from 5,141 acres; 3,003 bushels of peaches from 831 acres; 2,762 bushels of strawberries from 38 acres; 2,481 bushels of raspberries from 69 acres; and 2,343 bushels of pears from 67 acres.

Ezra Lay held the office of township supervisor for seven years from 1858-1864. He was a President of the Eastern Michigan Agricultural Society for two years and was elected to the State senate for a two-year term in 1874 as a Republican.

At the time that the 1881 *Washtenaw County History* was being published through the efforts of the Washtenaw County Pioneer Society, Ezra held the office of President of that organization, and I don't need to remind you that the Washtenaw County Historical Society is the successor of the Pioneer Society.

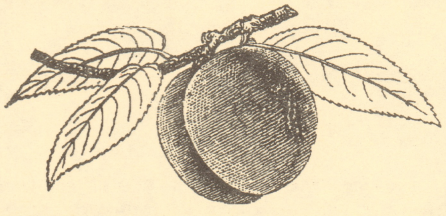
Ezra survived his brother by more than 40 years, dying on 28 April 1890. He is buried at Highland Cemetery.

As a preservationist whose special interest in Greek Revival vernacular architecture is well known to many of you, I would be derelict if I didn't bring you up to date on the history and disposition of Ezra's property.

In 1965 after what can only be called a checkered career that included being divided into apartments, a stint as a speakeasy during Prohibition and a suspected stop on the Underground Railroad, this important historic residence was offered to the City of Ypsilanti for relocation, restoration and preservation by then owners, Clyde Budd and Donald H. Porter.

Though its greenhouse and other outbuildings were long gone, its architectural merit had been recognized by Emil Lorch at the U-M's architecture school who described it as "one of the finest examples of Greek Revival architecture in the Midwest."

Area residents who also saw its importance as a historic resource did their best to rally support for its preservation, but Ypsilanti city officials rejected the offer on the grounds of prohibitive restoration and maintenance costs.



An *Ann Arbor News* article, dated February 9,1966, reported the eleventh-hour rescue of the house by Mr. and Mrs. Charles V. Hagler who purchased it for one dollar, contingent on its being moved from the original site.

In November 1981, the Haglers were the speakers for that month's County Historical Society meeting, and the December issue of *Washtenaw Impressions* contains their description of shoveling out all the junk, getting architectural drawings made, separating the main block from its kitchen wing, moving it to its present location at 3401 Berry Road in Superior Township and rehabilitating it for modern reuse.

Mrs. Hagler's credentials as curator of fine furniture at Greenfield Village gave her several advantages that paid off in achieving a sympathetic adaptation of the historic resource to present day standards, and although their presentation was sometimes titled, "A Dollar House Is No Bargain," Mrs. Hagler expressed their reward in terms of their belief that they were doing it not just for themselves but for future generations.

And her prediction was correct. In 1987 Professor Brad Perkins and his wife, Nancy, purchased the house from the Haglers and brought a new interpretation of comfort and stylishness to the old house.

Prior to Nancy's untimely death in 1993, she and Professor Perkins established the Springhill Nature Preserve by deeding thirty of the fifty-five acres purchased with the house to the Superior Land Conservancy, for preservation as a wildlife habitat.

Finally, a perpetual conservation easement was placed on the property to assure that it will be retained forever in its natural state.

In a chapter titled, "The Great Fruit State of the Northwest," Charles W. Garfield, writing for an 1882 publication describes the wonders of the fruit belt along the Lake Michigan coast on the west side of Michigan and characterized Lake Michigan as a "cherishing mother to the orchardist." But lest our own county's lands be overlooked, he states:

> The old derisive songs that told of ague, marshes, rattlesnakes, and wolverines as the natural products of Michigan are not sung anymore...and he ends by focusing on Washtenaw County with these glowing words:
>
> Upon the high ground in this region peaches are almost as sure a crop as upon the western shore. Fruits of all kinds are grown for market here and at a good profit. The people are foremost in testing new varieties and take a great delight in the pleasures as well as the profits of horticulture. There is scarcely anything but rich land in this county, and the situation of our great University and Normal School within its borders makes it an attractive place for people of education and good taste.

I'm sure the Lay brothers would agree, and anyone who has marked August 19th on his calendar so as not to miss the first Pink Champagne peaches at the Ann Arbor Farmer's Market can surely understand and forgive Garfield's enthusiasm.

When Arlene Schmid took the traveling exhibit to school recently she asked the children to draw some way children had fun a 100 years ago before electricity. Among many ideas was jumping rope as above.

WHAT'S IT? LOAN BOX MAKING ROUNDS

WCHS's loan box, "Life Before Electricity," and the What's It? games went to Burns Park School most recently, Arlene Schmid, chairman, said.

Teachers may rent the loan box for $15. The games are presented free. Information665-8773.

TOMBOY, OPERA SINGER TIED TO DOLL GIVEN WCHS

This is the story of how a tomboy and a famous Italian opera singer are tied to a doll in the WCHS collection which was exhibited at Briarwood Mall during the holidays.

The doll, called Miss Emily by the donor's family, was given by Dr. Louis W. Doll of Bay City, professor emeritus of Delta College. His family is from Chelsea and Ann Arbor.

Miss Emily belonged to his aunt, Verena Beissel (1872-1934). His mother, Anna Mary Doll (1874-1944) had a similar doll but she played with hers so much she wore it out. Her sister, Verena preferred ball games and didn't play with hers "hence its excellent state of preservation," Dr. Doll said.

In 1957, on the way to visit relatives, Dr. Doll happened on to an antique shop about two miles west of Paw Paw with a large collection of dolls.

The proprietor's collection had the same type of heads as Miss Emily. They were not play things but models in dressmaker's stores with contemporary clothing the dressmaker could make. The customer could select color and design variations and materials.

In the days before ready-made clothing, dolls too were not already dressed or even have ready-made bodies. In the 19th century they bought the heads and hands and made the rest of the doll.

The Paw Paw collector's dolls' heads were of famous women of the time, American and European, many of them royalty.

Cartes de visite were also popular in those days and were collected by the proprietor. From them she identified the doll head and made a dress similar to that on the card, using old materials.

The next time Dr. Doll went through Paw Paw he took Miss Emily. The proprietor took one look and said "Adelina Patti." Patti (1843-1919) was a famous Italian soprano.

Miss Emily's dress is the original one made for it by Dr. Doll's grandmother, Sarah Staffan Beissel (1837-1914).

A second, larger doll, also exhibited at Briarwood, was also handmade except for head and hands. Edna Wiers Townsend (Mrs. Richard E.) donated it. Her mother, Florence Hill Wiers, made the doll and clothing about 1900.

HOW TO JOIN

Please send name, address and phone number with check or money order payable to WCHS Membership, c/o Patty Creal, Treasurer, P.O. Box 3336, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3336.

Annual dues are individual, $15; couple/family, $25; student or senior (60+), $10; senior couple, $19; business association, $50; patron, $100. Information: 662-9092.

ARTIFACTS TO DONATE?

Anyone wishing to donate an artifact to WCHS should contact Judy Chrisman, collections chair, at 769-7859 or by mail, 1809 Dexter Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48103.

AROUND THE COUNTY

Salem Historical Society: 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 24, Salem Township Hall. Kathleen Aznavorian, president of Fox Hills Golf Course: "Past and Present."

Saline Society: 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 16,. Janice Martin Israel will reminisce about the Barr, Martin, Tower and Austin families of South Ann Arbor Street.

Webster Society: 7:45 p.m. Monday, May 12, at new Webster Township Hall, 5665 Webster Church Road. Barbara and Louis Marr will talk about "A Historic Overview of Post and Beam Buildings."

The public is invited.

HISTORIC DISTRICT MEETINGS LISTED

Ann Arbor Historic District Commission: 7:30 p.m., second Thursday, Ann Arbor City Council Chamber, City Hall.

Washtenaw County Historic District Commission: 4:30 p.m. first Thursday, County Planning Commission office, 110 N. Fourth Ave.

Ypsilanti Historic District Commission: 7 p.m. first and third Tuesdays, City Hall, 1 S. Huron.

CERTIFICATES OFFERED

Hand-lettered certificates are offered free of charge, framed if desired, by WCHS to organizations, businesses, schools, etc. for milestone anniversaries. Information: 663-8826.

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WCHS Office: (313) 662-9092
Published September-May, except December, January.

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Post Office Box 3336
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106-3336

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WASHTENAW VILLAGES

2 p.m. Sunday
April 20, 1997

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